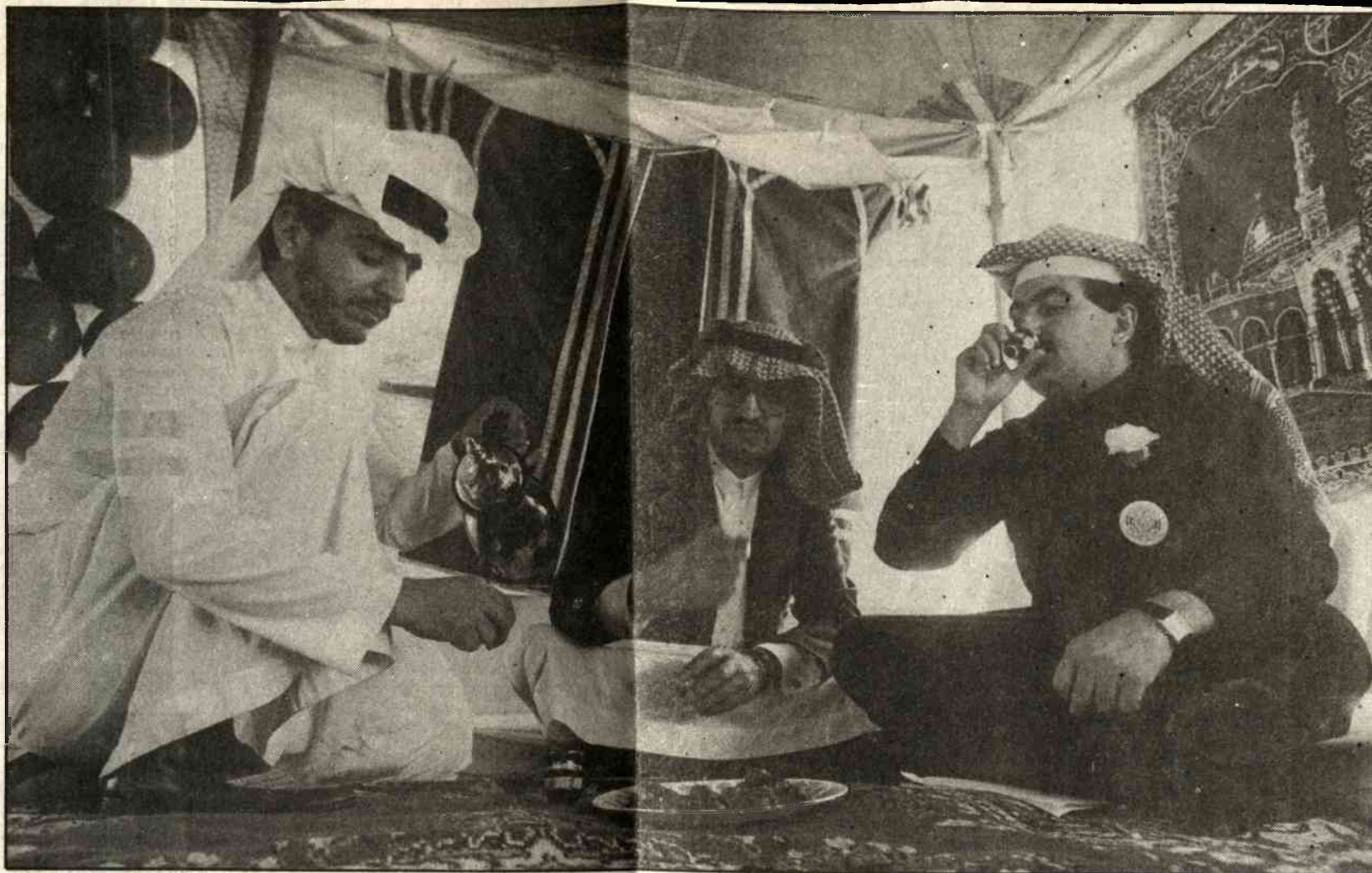


Moslem tradition: Mohamed Al-Askar pours coffee for Mohamed Hatoori and Hassan Al-Ghambi as they illustrate breaking of the Ramadan fast. Ramadan begins Wednesday for members of religious order Islam.



Story by
Dave Delaney

Photos by
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“There’s actually a lot of similarity between Islam and Christianity. We believe that Jesus was one of the prophets and will come again.”

— Majed Khaleefa

A month of fasting and prayer

In the world of Islam, Ramadan is holiest time

Churches (WU) - Islamic Center
T s APR 26 1987

On Wednesday begins a holy time for adult Moslems — Ramadan, the month of fasting.

From then until May 29, Moslems abstain from food, drink and sex from dawn to sunset. After the month-long fast comes fast-breaking, when believers customarily invite friends to their homes for feasting.

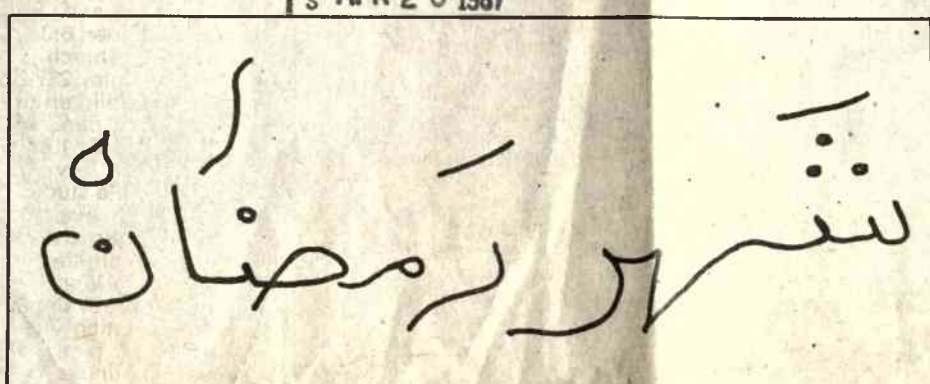
Ramadan is the name of the ninth month of the Islamic religious calendar. It is traditionally regarded as the month in which the first revelation of the Koran, the Moslems’ holy book, was made to Mohammed. Because Ramadan is based on the lunar calendar, it changes yearly.

About 600 Moslems attend Indiana State University, said ISU international student Director Roger Lehr. They and other Moslems from many countries in Terre Haute are expected to observe the fast.

The fasting is a form of purification, explained Majed Khaleefa, an Indiana State University student from the United Arab Emirates. “It lets us understand how the poor feel.”

The dawn-to-sunset fasting begins very early each day, said Akhtar H. Siddiqi, ISU professor of geography and adviser to the Muslim Student Association. Fasting starts with “the false dawn, when it’s not yet dawn and still dark outside.”

Kibin H. Samad of Malaysia said it’s common practice for fasters to set their alarm to have breakfast before dawn. “Good Muslims don’t cheat [by eating or



The Islamic word for the holy month of Ramadan.

drinking) during the day,” said the ISU student, who lives in Maehling Terrace, married student housing at 200 Farrington St.

Still, practitioners sometimes suffer minor lapses in fasting.

Siddiqi said days lost must be made up after Ramadan’s conclusion. “But they may not do it on the first day after the end of Ramadan” when the festival begins.

Women cannot observe the fasting during their menstrual period, he said. They, too, must make up days lost after Ramadan ends.

Adults may get a dispensation from fasting during Ramadan if they are sick or are medically advised not to fast, Siddiqi said. But to participate, “they can limit their diet and give the extra —

food or money — to the needy.

“Children are not allowed to fast until age 13, the start of puberty,” Siddiqi explained. “But if they want to, they can do it. It’s up to parental discretion.”

Although eating, drinking and sex are prohibited from dawn to sunset, Siddiqi said life goes on otherwise. “You can do all kinds of work, and regular things.”

Khaleefa said it can be physically demanding to work while fasting. “But it’s still an exciting time,” he said.

And once dusk descends, food and liquids are permitted. “Every day after sunset we eat and drink,” explained Samad.

During the recent international student festival at ISU, students

demonstrated the breaking of the fast by sharing a plate of dates.

After the month-long fasting comes a time of festival and feasting. It varies from one to four days, depending upon the culture.

“The feast is a time of socialization, and merrymaking — but not immoral,” Siddiqi said, mentioning dancing, feasting and even beating the drums. “You show respect to elders.”

Khaleefa said in his country a general feeling of celebration arises at the conclusion of Ramadan. “The schools, businesses, everything closes for three days then,” he explained. “Children get presents and adults do things like go to the beach or picnic.”

Locally, Samad said, “after Ramadan we have open house where we enjoy lots of food.” He said many Moslems live in married student housing, and, consequently, lots of visiting follows the month-long fast.

Although food and drink are a major part of the celebration, imbibing in alcohol is not. Siddiqi said Moslems are not to drink alcohol.

In addition to the fasting and feasting, another important element of Ramadan is prayer.

Khaleefa said Moslems must pray five times a day year-round. “Also on Friday we pray two hours,” he added. “Our Friday is like your Sunday.”

During Ramadan, special prayers are offered during the pre-dawn prayer session, Siddiqi said. Likewise, another

special prayer is said during the last session of the day, around 8 p.m. at night.

And before the first pre-dawn prayer after Ramadan, Siddiqi said Moslems set aside *fitra* — grain, grape or money — for distribution to the needy.

Siddiqi said “it is not compulsory to go” to the noontime Friday prayer session, “but it is considered preferable to offer prayer in the mosque.” Moslems are also encouraged to pray in the mosque at other times of the week, if possible.

The local Islamic Center, or mosque, is at 1319 S. Sixth St.

Khaleefa said everyone must take off his or her shoes before going into the mosque to pray. “It’s a sign of respect,” he explained. Khaleefa also said some people take off their shoes before entering a house as a carryover from the mosque.

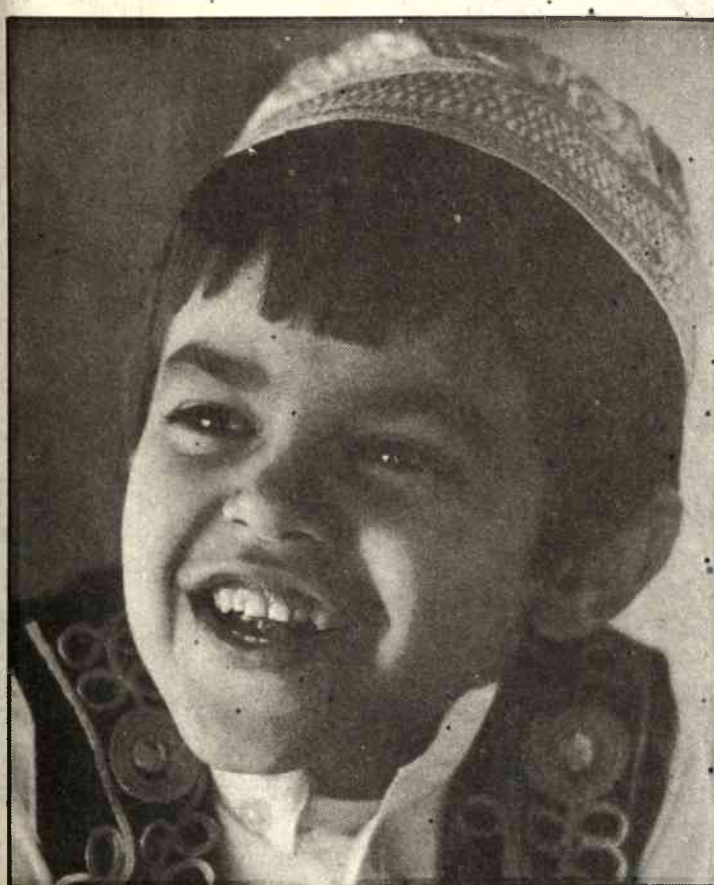
“Another thing you do is never point the bottom of your foot to anyone,” he said, explaining it was bad manners in his culture. Also, Moslems never touch anyone with the left hand.

Khaleefa said the Koran teaches that all races are equal.

“There’s actually a lot of similarity between Islam and Christianity,” said the ISU student. “We believe that Jesus was one of the prophets and will come again.”



Time for prayer: Al-Askar, Hatoori and Al-Ghambi will spend hours in prayer.



Youthful observance: Young people such as Masen Abdullah, a member of the Terre Haute Moslem community, will also participate in Ramadan.

Islamic followers number 1 billion

Islam is one of the monotheistic religions based on a belief in one God — Allah.

Its one billion followers are called Moslems. The religion goes back to the country of Arabia around the year A.D. 610, when Mohammed began to receive revelations from God through the angel Gabriel, according to a brochure from the Saudi Arabian embassy.

The practice of Islam is founded on a commitment to serve God and to support the members of the community. Islam actually means submission or service to the will of Allah. Moslems believe they are an important part of their society and are responsible for its welfare.

The basic tenets of Islam are referred to as the Five Pillars.

- The first is a belief in one God.
- The second pillar is that Moslems must pray

five times a day. The first prayer is before dawn, said Akhtar H. Siddiqi, adviser to the Indiana State University Muslim Student Association. The last is around 8 p.m. at night.

• Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is the third pillar.

• The fourth is alms giving to the poor, called *zakat*. Moslems give 2½ percent of their net worth, not counting such items as furniture or a house, Siddiqi said. Because the rich have more, the proportion ensures that they give in greater amounts.

• The fifth pillar is making a pilgrimage, or *Haji*, to Mecca, the holiest spot in Islam. A person is expected to make at least one trip to this city in Saudi Arabia during their lifetime if at all possible.